

THE FREE APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL STUDENT AID (FAFSA)

TIP SHEET FOR STUDENTS

This Tip Sheet, provided by the California Student Aid Commission, is intended to be a quick reference only. Be sure to carefully read ALL the instructions in your FAFSA booklet. You can find additional information and links on the Commission's Web site at www.csac.ca.gov.

California students must file two forms: a FAFSA and a Cal Grant GPA Verification form, by **March 2*** to qualify for state-sponsored grant programs including Cal Grants.

Apply for financial aid immediately. Don't wait until you have been accepted into a college for you or your parents to file year-end tax returns. You may use estimates from December pay stubs and other end-of-year records, which can be corrected later when you receive your Student Aid Report (SAR).

Before You Begin

Allow time to gather records of income earned during the previous calendar year. Gather all of the following that apply to you:

- Your Social Security card and driver's license or State ID;
- W-2 form(s) or other records of income earned;
- Your federal income tax return, and your spouse's if you are married;
- Your parents' federal income tax returns
- Records of other untaxed income received, such as welfare benefits (TANF), Social Security benefits, child support received, payments to IRAs or 401(k)s, or military or clergy allowances;
- Current bank statements and records of stocks, bonds and other investments;
- Business or farm records, if applicable;
- Your Alien Registration number (if you are not a U.S. citizen)

Note: Fill out worksheets A, B and C from the FAFSA before you get started.

With a PIN, You Can Quickly File On-line

You can file your FAFSA on-line accurately, quickly and conveniently (and we hope you do). All you have to do is:

- Go on the Web at www.fafsa.ed.gov, then follow the prompts and get a Personal Identification Number (PIN). Your parents need to set up a PIN, also.
- Fill out the FAFSA at the same Web site as above and submit it. If you use a PIN when filing on-line, you don't have to sign and mail in a signature page.

Tip: Complete the FAFSA on the Web Pre-Application Worksheet before going on-line. Get it at www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Remember, it's not called the FREE Application for Federal Student Aid for nothing. There is no charge to file on-line if you access the FAFSA from www.fafsa.ed.gov. (Avoid sites that charge you for this service.) For links to free scholarship search sites, try www.finaid.org.

Once You've Completed the Form

In most cases, both you and your parents must sign the FAFSA, or the signature page if you are filing on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov and don't have a PIN. Unsigned forms will not be processed.

If you are mailing your forms, be sure to get a Certificate of Mailing (90 cents) from the U.S. Postal Service as evidence that your FAFSA documents were sent on time.

Filing a FAFSA generates a SAR that will be sent to you. If you provided an e-mail address when completing the FAFSA, you will receive a SAR right away at your e-mail address. If you have not received your SAR within four weeks of submitting your FAFSA, it is important to call (800) 4-FED AID (that's 800-433-3243) to ask about the delay.

And finally, if you have any questions, need any clarification about the FAFSA, or need a paper form, be sure to contact your high school counselor or financial aid office.



*When March 2 falls on a Sunday or holiday, the deadline is extended to the following business day.